31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources

1. Meeting statistics of United Nations organs: consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

Introduction and overview

1. Since 1983, the Committee on Conferences has studied a series of reports containing the meeting statistics and, in more recent years, the documentation statistics of a core sample of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. Statistics on bodies meeting in Nairobi have been included since 1998.

2. At its 418th meeting, on 30 August 1999, the Committee reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on meeting statistics of United Nations organs that had met in 1998 (A/AC.172/1999/3).

3. Moreover, in paragraph 23 of its resolution 53/208 A of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Committee on Conferences to consult with those bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated conference resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources. Furthermore, in paragraph 24 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested that the Chairperson of the Committee transmit a letter to the chairpersons of all bodies that had utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated conference resources in the previous year, informing them of the problem and drawing their attention to the significant loss of meeting time, with a view to encouraging appropriate action on their part so as to improve the utilization of conference resources.

99-25051 (E)

4. At the same meeting, the Committee considered an oral report made by the Chairperson on the actions taken pursuant to the requests set out in paragraph 3 above.

Discussion

5. The view was expressed that the utilization factor for a number of subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and for the Economic and Social Council itself was very low, and the hope was expressed that the utilization factor could be improved in the future.

6. It was requested that in reports on this agenda item to be presented to the Committee on Conferences in the future, the organs be listed in the order of their utilization factors. It was also requested that utilization factors for a three-year period be provided in the report so that trends in the utilization factors of various bodies could be easily identified.

7. The view was also expressed that the incorporation of the statistics for Nairobi in all the analytical tables for future reports, when data for the three-year period was available, would be welcome.

8. The Committee expressed the view that the utilization factor and the benchmark figure of 80 per cent was a goal to be achieved by each duty station separately, which should also be reflected in the report.

9. The view was expressed that consultations between the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences and the chairpersons of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the past three sessions should continue as person-to-person contacts, with a view to yielding better results than a formal letter would.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee on Conferences took note with appreciation that the overall utilization factor for 1998 exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent and that the utilization factors at Geneva and Vienna were 87 per cent and 88 per cent respectively, the same as last year. However, the Committee noted with concern that the utilization factor for New York represented a one percentage point drop, to 77 per cent, falling short of the benchmark.

11. The Committee looked forward to the inclusion of the statistics for Nairobi in the analytical tables.

12. The Committee expressed concern that in 1998 only 56 per cent of the bodies in the sample utilized 80 per cent or more of their available conference-servicing resources.

13. The Committee took note of the oral report by the Chairperson on consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them and requested the Chairperson to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairpersons of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

2. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

Introduction and overview

14. In its resolutions 50/206 A of 23 December 1995 and 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide, within the resources

approved for conference services for the bienniums 1996–1997 and 1998–1999 respectively, interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, taking into account the priority due to meetings included in the calendar of conferences and meetings.

15. Moreover, in section A, paragraph 9, of resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, the General Assembly decided to include all necessary resources in the budget for the biennium 1998–1999 to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice. Subsequently, in paragraph 28 of resolution 53/208 A, the Assembly reiterated its decision for the biennium 2000–2001, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, a report on the implementation of that decision.

16. Pursuant to the above request, the Committee considered the report by the Secretary-General contained in document A/54/208 at its 418th meeting, on 30 August 1999.

Discussion

17. The Committee congratulated and thanked the members of the Secretariat for the fact that 83 per cent of the requests for interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States had been met, and also supported the technique of over-programming in order to meet those requests.

18. Support was expressed for the conclusion contained in paragraph 13 of the report, but the view was expressed that it was difficult to plan work programmes in advance as there was a certain degree of improvisation to be taken into account in view of the evolution of the debate in various intergovernmental bodies. The importance of meetings of regional groups in the functioning of the intergovernmental bodies was emphasized.

Conclusions and recommendations

19. The Committee on Conferences took note of the report on the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States.

20. In view of the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of sessional bodies, and in view of the significant increase in the requests for such meetings, the Committee welcomed the fact that 83 per cent of the requests for interpretation services had been met while 100 per cent of the requests for facilities only had been met.

21. While recognizing that meetings of Charter and mandated bodies must be serviced as a priority, the Committee regretted that 17 per cent of the requests for interpretation services made by regional and other major groupings of Member States had not been met.

22. The Committee again urged intergovernmental bodies to spare no effort at the planning stage to take into account meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, to make provision for such meetings in their programmes of work and to notify Conference Services well in advance of any cancellations so that unutilized conference-servicing resources may, to the extent possible, be reassigned to meetings of regional and other major groupings of States.

23. The Committee requested the Secretariat to include in future reports a breakdown on the item of the requests by regional groups.

30 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

D. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

Introduction and overview

1. At its 418th meeting, on 30 August 1999, the Committee considered a note by its secretariat (A/AC.172/1999/CRP.5) containing requests from subsidiary bodies for exceptions to be made to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, in which the Assembly decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

2. In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee, the requests included explanations as to (a) why the bodies wished to meet; (b) why they had not completed their work by the deadline of 1 September, as laid down in section I, paragraph 6, of Assembly resolution 40/243; (c) why it was necessary to meet during the session of the Assembly; and (d) how many meetings would be required. Statistical information was also provided on the number of meetings, if any, that the bodies concerned had held during the fifty-third session of the Assembly and the efficiency with which they had utilized the resources made available to them.

Conclusions and recommendations

3. The Committee on Conferences recommended to the General Assembly that it explicitly authorize the following bodies to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, on the understanding that meetings would

99-24966 (E)

have to be accommodated as facilities and services became available, so that the activities of the Assembly itself would not be adversely affected: Committee on Relations with the Host Country; Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; and the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund.

A/AC.172/1999/CRP.9/Add.5

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources

3. Improved utilization of conference facilities at Nairobi; possibility of establishing a permanent interpretation service at Nairobi; provision of interpretation services to other locations from permanent interpretation structures in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi

Introduction and overview

1. With regard to the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the General Assembly, in paragraphs 17 and 18 of its resolution 53/208 A of 18 December 1998, expressed concern that the conference facilities at Nairobi were still underutilized during 1996 and 1997, and reiterated its call for better utilization of those facilities. In paragraph 21 of the same resolution, the Assembly invited all subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission on Human Settlements, and encouraged Member States, intergovernmental bodies and regional and other major groupings to consider increasing their use of the conference facilities at Nairobi. In paragraph 22, the Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to assist the aforementioned bodies in improving that situation and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, on the actions taken to that end.

2. With regard to the possibility of establishing a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the General Assembly, in paragraph 19 of its resolution 53/208 A, requested the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of establishing a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, in view of the fact

99-25065 (E)

that it had been upgraded to a full-fledged United Nations conference centre, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

3. At its 418th meeting, on 30 August 1999, the Committee considered the reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/54/221 and A/54/262. The representative of the Secretariat also presented an oral report on the matter to the Committee.

4. In paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 A, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, without prejudice to the practices currently used to meet interpretation requirements, to examine the provision of interpretation services to other locations from permanent interpretation structures based in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

5. At its 419th meeting, on 30 August 1999, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/54/176.

6. At the Committee's 421st meeting, on 31 August 1999, the representative of the Secretariat presented a report on the estimated cost to the Secretariat of holding a three-day session of the Committee on Conferences at Nairobi (A/AC.172/1999/CRP.10).

Discussion

7. Despite some improvement in the utilization rate of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, which was attributed to more efficient data-gathering and record-keeping, expansion of the Office's programme of work and efforts to encourage non-United Nations bodies to utilize the facilities, concern was nevertheless expressed at the overall low number of meetings held at the centre. The Secretariat was encouraged to take further initiatives to improve the utilization rate, including through closer cooperation with the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and through specific policies to attract non-United Nations bodies, including private-sector entities.

8. The view was expressed that, by holding one of its sessions at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Committee would draw attention to the problems faced by duty stations away from Headquarters and set an example for other intergovernmental bodies to emulate.

9. Concern was expressed, however, at the cost such an initiative would entail for States members of the Committee, which might discourage their participation in the work of the session.

10. Concern was also expressed over whether such an initiative would be consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters.

11. In response to the concerns expressed, the representative of the Secretariat pointed out that, while the headquarters principle reaffirmed in Assembly resolution 40/243 placed the regular session of the Committee on Conferences at Headquarters, it also contained provisions for seeking exceptions to that principle.

12. It was suggested that the Committee should agree on the principle of holding one of its future sessions at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and include a proposal to that effect in the agenda of its next substantive session.

13. While reference was made to the basic conclusion of the Secretary-General in his report contained in document A/54/262, that the creation of a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi might not be immediately cost-effective and

might not result in improved utilization of its meeting facilities, the view was expressed that the political aspects of the proposal must also be considered. Furthermore, from the methodological point of view, calculations of the cost of an interpretation service should include estimates of the income that could accrue to the regular budget on account of reimbursements for interpretation services to be provided to extrabudgetary or non-United Nations bodies that could meet in Nairobi as a result of the availability of an interpretation team. Financial information should also include the costs for the regular budget that could result from the possible need to assign Nairobi-based interpreters to service meetings held elsewhere in order to ensure their full utilization. It was felt, moreover, that as one of the four full-fledged United Nations conference centres, the United Nations Office at Nairobi should in time be equipped with a permanent interpretation service, independently of its needs.

14. The representative of the Secretariat reported on the experiment in remote interpretation carried out earlier in 1999, during which a two-week session held at Geneva had been provided with remote interpretation services from Vienna. The experiment revealed the importance of visual information for the remote interpreters and the need to refine further the video component of the equipment used. Future activities would focus on the experimental servicing from Geneva of a meeting to be held at Nairobi. Discussion would begin shortly to determine whether the Mercure satellite available to the United Nations Office at Nairobi could be used to emulate the ISDN links needed for remote interpretation.

15. The view was expressed that the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/54/176 should be considered to be preliminary. Further reports were needed that would take account not only of technological possibilities but also of the cost benefits of remote interpretation, including the relative cost advantages of the different conference centres that were likely providers of remote interpretation services. Emphasis was also placed on the need to involve interpreters in the development of the new system, as the physical and psychological well-being of interpreters was directly related to their performance on the job.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Committee took note of the reports of the Secretary-General on improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/54/221) and on the possibility of establishing a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/54/262).

17. The Committee took note with appreciation of the efforts of the Secretariat to encourage increased utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and urged the Secretariat to continue its efforts in that regard.

18. The Committee expressed concern at the low number of meetings held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and encouraged all bodies concerned to make better use of the conference facilities of the Office.

19. The Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare detailed proposals on the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, including by non-United Nations entities.

20. The Committee considered that the holding of its sessions at the United Nations Office at Nairobi or other duty stations away from Headquarters could provide an excellent opportunity for further evaluation of the provision of conference services and decided to continue the discussion at an appropriate time and at an appropriate venue.

21. The Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive report on the possible establishment of a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and on the use of such a service by non-United Nations entities.

22. The Committee took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the provision of interpretation services to other locations from permanent interpretation structures in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi (A/54/176).

23. The Committee commended the efforts of the Secretariat to develop a system of remote interpretation, looked forward to additional experiments in the future and requested the Secretariat to further refine the cost considerations of remote interpretation.

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

III. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001: Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services

Analysis of problems related to career development and vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations

Introduction and overview

1. In paragraph 29 of its resolution 53/208 B of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly expressed regret for the difficulties being faced by language service staff in relation to their career development. In paragraph 30 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session analysing such problems as might exist related to career development in language services, bearing in mind that the numbers and grade levels of staff should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization, and that requirements differed between languages as well as between duty stations.

2. In addition, in paragraph 33 of its resolution 53/208 A of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on possible measures to alleviate the excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and ensure the required quality of conference services Secretariat-wide.

3. At its substantive session in 1998, the Committee on Conferences had requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, a report on the possibility of introducing a system of

99-25021 (E)

managed assignments based on non-monetary incentives, which would alleviate the excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations.

4. At its 419th meeting, on 30 August 1999, the Committee considered the reports by the Secretary-General contained in documents A/53/919 and Add.2.

5. The representative of the Secretariat stressed that career development must be understood in its broad sense, involving not only promotion prospects but also reassignment and training opportunities. A review of the post structure at the three main United Nations conference centres had indicated that career prospects compared favourably with the rest of the Secretariat for most of the language staff at the P-3 and P-4 levels, but that prospects for promotion to P-5 were limited. At all other duty stations, promotion to the P-4 and, a fortiori, to the P-5 levels was in many cases contingent upon reassignment to a language service in New York, Geneva or Vienna. In those same duty stations, vacancy rates ranging between 20 per cent and 50 per cent were clearly excessive.

Discussion

6. The view was expressed that the current system of voluntary acceptance of assignments at duty stations away from Headquarters was clearly not working. The recourse to relatively inexperienced translators at such duty stations was not an effective solution since the smaller duty stations had little capacity for training. A system of managed assignments was urgently needed in view of the current high vacancy rates for language staff, especially in the regional commissions. Information was sought on whether the typical language staff member pursued a career with the language services of the Organization or whether there was a high degree of mobility among such staff.

7. In response to questions raised, the representatives of the Secretariat indicated that attempts to adopt a more coercive approach to assignments away from Headquarters had met with some resistance. It was also difficult to establish an acceptable set of criteria for selecting staff members for assignment. In addition to receiving some guarantees regarding a return to their parent duty station upon completion of their assignment, those staff members could be offered incentives, such as enhanced promotion prospects. Generally speaking, the responsibilities of vacant posts in the regional commissions were discharged by freelance staff, pending the assignment of a career staff member. All newly recruited inexperienced translators went through a period of training at Headquarters before taking up their posts at smaller duty stations, where little or no capacity for training was available.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee took note of the reports of the Secretary-General on career development in language services contained in documents A/53/919 and Add.2.

9. The Committee looked forward to concrete proposals on a system of managed assignments based on career incentives and aimed at reducing the excessive vacancy rates at some duty stations.

10. The Committee also looked forward to the inclusion of the United Nations Office at Nairobi in any arrangement made to address the problem and in any report on the subject.

11. The Committee requested that the reports to be prepared should include additional information on the cost elements involved in the employment of freelance staff, recruited both locally and internationally.

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources

4. Improved coordination of conference services

Introduction and overview

1. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee on Conferences decided to consider, on a biennial basis, the means to ensure improved coordination of conference services within the United Nations system. Moreover, it requested Conference Services to maintain an active dialogue with the substantive secretariats of intergovernmental bodies, providing statistics and information on previous performance as well as guidelines on ways and means to enhance the utilization of conference-servicing resources. At its substantive session of 1996, the Committee had endorsed the idea of the Secretariat to make the active dialogue a permanent coordination feature and directed that such action should be taken at Headquarters, as well as the United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna.

2. In addition, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure closer cooperation between Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to improve the coordination of conference services. In paragraph 16 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to engage, on a regular basis, in an active dialogue with Member States as a permanent feature at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, in order to improve the coordination of conference services.

99-25071 (E)

3. Moreover, at its substantive session of 1998, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to review administrative instruction ST/AI/342 on guidelines for the preparation of host Government agreements falling under General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 to reflect the new organizational structure, which allowed for more effective coordination among the four United Nations conference-servicing centres in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, with a view to determining the most cost-effective option for the Organization while ensuring the required standard of service. This request was reiterated in paragraph 37 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 A of 18 December 1998.

4. At its 420th meeting, on 31 August 1999, the Committee considered an oral report on the matter.

Discussion

5. The view was expressed that the videoconference should be made part of a formal meeting of the Committee on Conferences, as its value would be enhanced and its findings could then be incorporated into the report of the Committee. The view was also expressed that the holding of the videoconference at the start of the session would enable members to make more effective use of the information provided at the videoconference.

6. The members were of the view that administrative instruction ST/AI/342 on guidelines for the preparation of host Government agreements falling under General Assembly resolution 40/243 needed to be revised to include the United Nations offices at Vienna and Nairobi. In response to questions raised, the Secretariat clarified that although the administrative instruction had not been revised, the policy did include the above-mentioned offices. It was also possible to issue a revision to the relevant administrative instruction addressing only the conference-servicing areas of responsibility.

Conclusions and recommendations

7. The Committee on Conferences took note with appreciation of the oral report presented on improved coordination of conference services.

8. The Committee requested the Secretariat, when preparing the draft agenda for the next substantive session of the Committee, to take into account the proposals regarding the inclusion and timing of the videoconference.

9. The Committee encouraged the Secretariat to continue the active dialogue between Conference Services and the secretariats of intergovernmental bodies.

10. The Committee looked forward to a revision of the relevant administrative instruction with regard to conference-servicing responsibility.

11. The Committee also encouraged expanded efforts towards a coordinated approach within Conference Services to efficiently and effectively provide services from all duty stations.

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

II. Control and limitation of documentation

A. Review of the late issuance of documentation

Introduction and overview

1. At its substantive session in 1998, the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretariat to submit to it, at its substantive session in 1999, a report containing data on the reasons for delays in the issuance of documentation and an analysis of the additional costs incurred by document-processing services and of other financial implications of the late submission and issuance of documentation. Subsequently, in paragraph 9 of resolution 53/208 B of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly endorsed this request. In paragraph 4 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to carry out a study on the possible relationship between the late issuance of documentation and the low utilization factor of conference services by some bodies.

2. At its 421st meeting, on 31 August 1999, the Committee considered a conference room paper on the matter (A/AC.172/1999/CRP.8).

Discussion

3. Concern was expressed over the late submission of documents and the non-compliance with the six-week rule, which, in many cases, was attributable to the author departments, and which consequently resulted in additional costs for general temporary assistance and/or overtime necessary to compress turnaround time.

99-25077 (E)

4. The view was expressed that the decision of the General Assembly in paragraph 8 of resolution 53/208 B be reiterated, since it had not been fully complied with.

5. The possibility of a further review and study of the problem of the late issuance of documentation and its relationship to the low utilization factor of certain United Nations organs was suggested.

Conclusions and recommendations

6. The Committee on Conferences took note of the report on the review of the late issuance of documentation (A/AC.172/1999/CRP.8).

7. The Committee suggested a further analysis of cases in which the limited availability of documentation coincided with a low utilization factor with a view to ascertaining whether a direct relationship existed.

8. The Committee looked forward to receiving updated information on the number and length of documents.

9. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it reaffirm that if a report is submitted late to conference services, the reasons for this should be included in a footnote to the document.

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

E. Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 2000–2001

Introduction and overview

1. In its decision 1988/103 of 5 February 1988, the Economic and Social Council invited the Committee on Conferences to review the Council's draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings and to submit, as appropriate, its recommendations thereon to the Council.

2. At its 417th meeting, on 24 June 1999, the Committee considered the Council's provisional biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2000–2001 (E/1999/L.18 and A/AC.172/1999/CRP.1).

Discussion

3. Clarification was sought and received from the Secretariat regarding various aspects of the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 2000–2001 in the economic, social and related fields, including but not limited to the overlap of dates of some meetings in the same sectors.

99-25059 (E)

4. Concern was expressed regarding the requests of intergovernmental bodies to seek exceptions to the biennialization of their sessions. Specific attention was drawn to the issue of annualization of the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women starting in 2001, and the view was expressed that this should be reconsidered at an appropriate time in the light of the principle of biennialization of conferences and meetings referred to in paragraph 2 (f) (ii) of Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77 of 29 July 1988.

5. The Committee was assured by the Secretariat that the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council were, to the extent possible, scheduled to end their 2000–2001 sessions at least eight weeks prior to the scheduled dates for the substantive session of the Council, in accordance with paragraph 2 (f) (i) of Council resolution 1988/77.

Conclusions and recommendations

6. The Committee on Conferences recommended the adoption of the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council for 2000–2001 (E/1999/L.18), with the amendments read out by the representative of the Secretariat.

7. The Committee encouraged the Council to continue its consideration of the biennialization of meetings of its subsidiary bodies.

8. The Committee also expressed the hope that overlap of meetings related to the same sector of activity could be avoided.

9. The Committee encouraged the Council to continue the review of its calendar as a whole in the context of its review of the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of its functional commissions and expert groups and bodies.

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

II. Control and limitation of documentation

B. Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

Introduction and overview

1. In paragraph 18 of resolution 53/208 B of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretariat to continue consultations with the secretariats of intergovernmental bodies with a view to informing them on the speedy issuance of unedited verbatim transcripts and the cost savings derived therefrom, and encouraging them to follow the example of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in carrying out the experiment with unedited verbatim transcripts so as to enable the Committee on Conferences to make final recommendations on the matter.

2. In addition, in paragraph 21 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that summary and verbatim records were issued in all six official languages concurrently.

3. At the Committee's 421st meeting, on 31 August 1999, the representative of the Secretariat presented an oral report on the question.

4. While the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continued to use unedited verbatim transcripts with results that the Committee found satisfactory, during the previous year there had been no indications pointing to the likely use of unedited verbatim transcripts by other subsidiary organs of the General Assembly.

99-25083 (E)

5. With their agreement, some subsidiary organs had been provided with transcripts on an experimental basis during the previous three years. Their conclusion, in general terms, was that the meeting records they currently received were better suited to their needs, a consideration also reflected by the Assembly in paragraph 19 of its resolution 53/208 B, in which it emphasized that the choice of unedited verbatim transcripts should be consistent with the needs of the bodies concerned.

6. The General Assembly's request for the simultaneous distribution of all language versions of meeting records was being given due consideration as it applies to verbatim records, since summary records, like all other documents, had always been distributed simultaneously in all languages.

Discussion

7. The view was expressed that intergovernmental bodies other than the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law could use unedited verbatim transcripts of their proceedings.

8. It was acknowledged, however, that such transcripts might not be adequate for the needs of certain bodies, as evidenced by the very small number of subsidiary organs that were willing to use them.

9. It was nevertheless proposed that the Committee reiterate its request to subsidiary organs to consider the use of unedited verbatim transcripts, in view of the considerable cost savings that could be realized.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee took note of the oral report on the provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly.

11. The Committee reiterated its request to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly to consider the use of unedited verbatim transcripts of their proceedings.

12. The Committee took note of the very limited number of subsidiary organs that had resorted to the use of unedited verbatim transcripts.

31 August 1999

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Koji F. X. **Yamagiwa** (Japan)

II. Control and limitation of documentation

C. Continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites

Introduction and overview

1. In paragraph 5 of resolution 53/208 C of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly stressed the need for continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites, with a view to achieving equal treatment of the six official languages on those Web sites. Furthermore, in paragraph 6 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it proposals in that connection at its fifty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences and the Committee on Information.

2. At its 416th meeting, on 21 April 1999, the Committee on Conferences decided to include in its agenda for 1999 item 3 (d), entitled "Continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites".

3. The report of the Secretary-General on the continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites (A/AC.198/1999/6) contained three proposals that sought to address the issue of equitable treatment of all official languages. The objective of proposal A was to achieve full parity among official languages, that of proposal B was to achieve concurrent equality among all official languages, and that of proposal C was to achieve modular parity among languages.

99-25089 (E)

Discussion

4. The representative of the Secretariat informed the Committee that the Committee on Information had requested the Secretariat to further develop proposal C and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its resumed session.

5. Responding to questions raised, the representative of the Secretariat explained that proposal C would seek not parity but rather to balance the need for parity with the prudent and realistic use of resources for that purpose. The United Nations Web site would be developed in all official languages as staff and other resources permitted, and the activity would be ongoing. Proposal C would therefore seem to be the preferred option.

6. Note was taken of the explosive growth of the United Nations Web site since its formal launching in 1995.

7. The view was expressed that the methodology employed in the elaboration of the three proposals should be further refined so that the full cost of their implementation over time would be more accurately reflected.

8. It was suggested that the report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/1999/6) might be a good basis for further discussion of the matter.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites (A/AC.198/1999/6).

10. The Committee looked forward to the additional information on the topic requested by the Committee on Information.